

Message Text

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ACTION OPR-02

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O 191652Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5168

UNCLAS BOGOTA 4946

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ASCH, ALLOW, CO

SUBJECT: COST INCREASE AT NUEVA GRANADA SCHOOL

1. THE BOARD OF THE USG-AIDED NUEVA GRANADA SCHOOL (IN WHICH MISSION DEPENDENTS ARE ENROLLED) TOOK A TENTATIVE DECISION EVENING MAY 18 TO REQUIRE ALL PARENTS OF NEWLY ENROLLED STUDENTS TO PURCHASE A BOND IN THE AMOUNT OF 15,000 PESOS (APPROX. \$450) PER STUDENT WHICH WOULD BE REFUNDABLE AFTER 15 YEARS. THE BOARD WOULD HAVE PREFERRED TO MAKE THE BOND NON-REDUNDABLE BUT WAS ADVISED BY ITS LAWYER THAT THIS WOULD BE ILLEGAL UNDER COLOMBIAN LAW. BOARD HAD ALSO GIVEN THOUGHT TO MAKING THE BOND REFUNDABLE ONLY AFTER AN EVEN LONGER PERIOD (FOR EXAMPLE, 20 OR 25 YEARS) FRANKLY HOPING THAT AFTER THAT TIME THERE WOULD IN MANY CASES BE NO DEMAND FOR A REFUND.

2. WE LEARNED THAT THE BOARD WAS GOING TO TAKE ACTION ON THIS MEASURE ONLY HOURS IN ADVANCE AND INFORMED THE SCHOOL THAT WE HAVE TO SEEK ADVICE ON AN URGENT BASIS FROM THE DEPT AS TO WHAT, IF ANYTHING, COULD BE DONE IN TERMS OF ALLOWANCES TO EASE THE BURDEN ON PARENTS AT THE MISSION WHO WOULD OTHERWISE BE OBLIGED TO PUT UP A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF MONEY FOR A LONG TERM DESPITE THE RELATIVELY BRIEF PERIOD OF SCHOOLING PROVIDED.

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3. THE SCHOLL DIRECTOR HAS INFORMED US THAT THE BOARD

IS SYMPATHETIC REGARDING THE PROBLEMS AND BURDENS POSED FOR MISSION PARENTS. IN THIS CONNECTION, DIRECTOR SAID SHE FELT CERTAIN THE BOARD WOULD BE PREPARED TO MAKE AN EXCEPTION IN THE CASES OF AMERICAN OFFICIAL DEPENDENTS, STIPULATING THAT FOR THEM THE BOND WOULD BE NON-REFUNDABLE BECAUSE OF THEIR TRANSIENT STATUS, IF THAT WOULD BE HELPFUL IN TERMS OF ALLOWANCES. SCHOOL DIRECTOR FURTHER COMMENTED THAT SHE FOREAW NO PROBLEMS WITH COLOMBIAN EDUCATIONAL AUTHORITIES IF SUCH AN EXCEPTION WERE MADE. MISSION FEELS THAT THIS APPROACH WOULD PROVIDE POSSIBLY ONLY FEASIBLE WAY OF AVOIDING THE COSTLY BURDEN THAT OTHERWISE WOULD BE PLACED ON MISSION PARENTS. (WE BASE THIS VIEW ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT THE DEPT WOULD NOT BE IN A POSITION TO ADVANCE TO PARENTS THE COST OF A 15-YEAR BOND.) BEFORE URGING THIS COURSE OF ACTION ON THE SCHOOL BOARD, HOWEVER, MISSION NEEDS URGENT ADVICE FROM THE DEPARTMENT AS TO WHETHER IT IS ACCEPTABLE. THAT IS, WE NEED TO KNOW WHETHER THE EDUCATIONAL ALLOWANCE COULD BE ADJUSTED TO COVER THE COST OF A NON-REFUNDABLE BOND ON THE GROUNDS THAT IT IS A SPECIAL FEE FOR TRANSIENTS. WE RECOGNIZE THAT AT FIRST SIGHT THIS PROCEDURE MIGHT SEEM TO SOME TO BE "DISCRIMINATORY". HOWEVER, MISSION FEELS THAT IT CLEARLY WOULD OPERATE TO THE ADVANTAGE OF AMERICAN MISSION PARENTS. THE "DISCRIMINATION" WOULD BE IN THEIR FAVOR, IN ACTUAL PRATICE.

4. ADMINISTRATIVE CONSIDERATIONS COMPEL THE BOARD TO REACH A FINAL DECISION ON THIS MATTER WITHIN DAYS. WE THEREFORE REQUEST A REPLY FROM THE DEPT ON URGENT BASIS AND BY IMMEDIATE CABLE OR PHONE.
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